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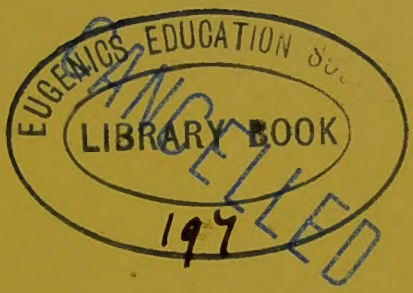

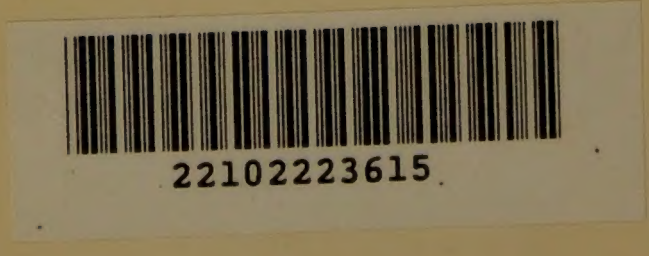
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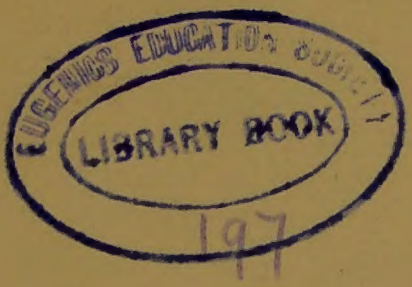
SEXUAL ETHICS



SEXUAL ETHICS

BY

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WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

By Dr. C. W. SALEEBY, F.R.S. Edin.

THERE is something absurd, as such, in a request for an introduction by any one to the work of one of the greatest of living thinkers, and something still more absurd in the fact that Professor Forel should, at this date, need an introduction to any intelligent audience in any civilised country, as it seems he does to English readers; but if compliance with that request is at all likely to increase, even by one, the number of his readers, it is a duty to comply with it.

Not to consider his treatises on philosophy and psychology, nor his long series of original and important researches on the senses and lives of the social insects, Professor Forel has already given to the world a volume entitled *Die Sexuelle Frage*—this has now

been published in English*—which is by far the best work on the sex question in any language, and has actually received on the Continent something like the recognition which is its due. The gist of its teaching is to be found in this little treatise on Sexual Ethics, and the reader who may find himself or herself unconvinced, or even repelled, by the brief and dogmatic theses of the following pages, may be earnestly counselled to read the larger work. Here, and in that, Professor Forel deals—always from the loftiest moral standpoint, the interests of human life at its highest—with the question which must remain fundamental for man so long as he is mortal, and with which the statesmen of the future will primarily concern themselves, realising as they will, and as the "blind mouths" called statesmen to-day cannot, that there is no wealth but life, that the culture of the racial life is the vital industry of any people, and must so remain so long as three times in every century the only wealth

* *The Sexual Question.* Rebman, Ltd.

of nations is reduced to dust and raised again from helpless infancy. Professor Forel sees this question from the only standpoint that is worthy of it. The sexual question is concerned with nothing less than the life of this world to come. It is for this reason that every productive sexual union should be a sacrament; it involves nothing less than the creation of a human life—the most tremendous act of which man or woman can be capable. It is the no less than sacred cause of Eugenics or Race-Culture that gives the sexual life its meaning and the dignity which it may rightly claim, and it is just because the Swiss thinker sees this and never loses sight of it that his work is so immeasurably raised above the ordinary discussions of marriage, prostitution, venereal disease, and the like. His claim for posterity on the ground of our debt to the past may be amplified by the reflection that, in serving the racial life, and in making its welfare the criterion of our sexual ethics, we are serving human beings as real as we are ourselves,

and tens or hundreds for units whom we can serve to-day. There is always an interval—nine months at least—and no one expects babies or politicians to associate cause and effect over such abysses of time; but there are others who are learning to think in generations, and Professor Forel will yet add to their number.

In his criticisms of alcohol and the abuse of capital, Professor Forel opposes himself to the most powerful of vested interests. Well, if you invest your interests in any other bank than that of the laws of life, you or your heirs will find that theirs is but a rotten concern. The history of organic evolution is proof enough that the higher life and the things which buttress it, "sagging but pertinacious," will always win through in the long run. As a direct enemy of human life, and notably through its influence upon the sexual instinct, alcohol is certainly doomed. If life is the only wealth, the manufacture of *illth* is a process too cannibal to be permitted for ever.

Professor Forel speaks of subduing the sexual instinct. I would rather speak of transmuting it. The direct method of attack is often futile, always necessitous of effort, but it is possible for us to transmute our sex-energy into higher forms in our individual lives, thus justifying the evolutionary and psychological contention that it is the source of the higher activities of man, of moral indignation and of the "restless energy" which has changed the surface of the earth. As directly interfering with this transmutation, the extent of which probably constitutes the essential difference between civilised and savage man, alcohol is the more to be condemned.

In what Professor Forel has to say regarding prostitution and the ideal of marriage, he will win assent from all except the profligate and those medical men who, in hideous alliance with the *protozoon* of syphilis and the *coccus* of gonorrhœa, defend prostitution and even acclaim it as the necessary complement to marriage. If there is a stronger

phrase than most damnable of lies to apply to such teaching, here is certainly the time for its employment. On this subject of prostitution, Professor Forel has said the last word in a masterly chapter of *Die Sexuelle Frage.* In his praise of monogamy, he is only echoing the stern verdict of the ages—delivered a thousand æons before any existing religion was born or thought of, and likely to outlast a whole wilderness of their dogmas. The essence of marriage I would define as *common parental care of offspring,* and its survival-value as consisting in the addition of the father's to the mother's care. In the absence of parenthood, a sexual association between man and woman is on the same plane as any other human association; it means neither more nor less, and must be judged as they are judged. It is when the life of the world to come is involved that new questions arise—questions as momentous as is the difference between the production of human life at its best and of a child rotten with syphilis, or permanently blinded to the

light as it opens its eyes for the first time, or doomed to intelligence less than a dog's.

I, for one, have no shadow of doubt that the ideal of sexual ethics will some day be realised, that pre-eminently preventable—because contagious—diseases like syphilis and gonorrhœa will be made an end of, that prostitution will disappear with its economic cause, that we shall make parenthood the privilege of the worthy alone, and thus create on earth a better heaven than ever theologians dreamed of in the sky. "There are many events in the womb of Time which will be delivered." Individuals are mortal, and churches, and creeds, but Life is not. Already the gap between moss or microbe and man is no small one, and the time to come is very nearly "unending long." Uranium and radium will see to that.

C. W. SALEEBY.

SEXUAL ETHICS

THE two conceptions of morality and sexual life are frequently confounded and expressed by the same term in the popular usages of speech. The word "moral" is commonly used to mean sexually pure, that is to say, continent; while the word "immoral" suggests the idea of sexual incontinence and debauch. This is a misuse of words, and rests upon a confusion of ideas, for sexuality has in itself nothing to do with morality. It points, however, to the undoubted fact that the sexual impulse, since it has other human beings as its object, easily leads to moral conflicts within the breast of the individual.

It will be convenient to discuss our subject under the two heads: I. Of ethics in general; and II. Of sexual ethics in particular.

I. Ethics

Ethics is the science of morals. Morals may be said to consist of two very distinct factors, which we will attempt to analyse :—

1. An instinctive sense, the conscience, sense of duty, or ethical impulse, which says to us : "This shalt thou do, and that shalt thou leave undone." A person in whom it is highly developed experiences satisfaction if he obeys the "voice of conscience," and remorse if he fails to do so.

2. The second factor of morals includes the objects of conscience, that is, the things which conscience commands or forbids.

The great philosopher Kant founded upon the instinct of conscience his Categorical Imperative, and held the further investigation of its causes to be unnecessary. If the conscience says "Thou shalt," one must simply act accordingly. This is, in Kant's opinion, the absolute moral law, which bids or forbids an action independently of any other consideration.

The further they progress, however, the more do reason and science rebel against the conception of the Categorical Imperative. Kant, great as he was, was not infallible. The imperative of the conscience is in itself no more categorical and absolute than that of the sexual impulse, of fear, of maternal love, or of other emotions and instincts.

In the first place daily observation shows us the existence of people born conscienceless, in whom the sense of duty is lacking, who are aware of no "Thou shalt," and in whose eyes other individuals are merely welcome objects for plunder or inconvenient hindrances. For these "ethically defective" persons there can be no categorical imperative, because they have no conception of duty.

The ethical sense may exist in varying degrees of intensity. In some persons the conscience is weak, in others strong; and there are cases in which it is developed to an exaggerated and morbid extent. People of this type suffer pangs of conscience over the merest trifle, reproach themselves for "sins"

which they have never committed, or which are no sins at all, and make themselves and others miserable. How can all this be reconciled with the absolute moral law as stated by Kant ?

The theory of the Categorical Imperative becomes even more absurd when we consider the actions to which men are guided by their consciences. The same habit—the drinking of wine, for instance—may be for one man a matter of duty (for a Christian at the Eucharist or for an officer at the toast of the King); for another (the Mohammedan) it may be forbidden as a deadly sin. Murder, which is certainly almost universally prohibited by conscience, is a " duty " in time of war, and even for certain persons in the duel. Such instances could be multiplied indefinitely.

We will presently state the profounder reasons which prove Kant's error; but we must first mention another source of pretended ethical commandments. The *religions* exhibit a remarkable medley of various pro-

ducts of human mystical phantasy and human emotions which have crystallised and formed themselves into legends and dogmas, and these latter have become interwoven with human morals in such a fashion that they seem at first inextricable.

The instinct of fear and the lust for power, the hypertrophy of the Ego and the ethical sentiments have here intermingled in a thousand different ways. More especially we may mention the fear of the unknown, of darker powers, and of death ; the expansion of the beloved Ego, which becomes idealised in the conception of godhead, and then immortalised ; the feelings of sympathy, antipathy and duty towards other individuals, and so forth. The mysterious powers which move the universe are then conceived as anthropomorphic (personal) gods, or as one such God.

The next stage is the attribution of godlike qualities to man, which flatters his vanity considerably, and gives him a sense of satisfaction.

As a result of this habit of thought, and assisted by the hallucinations of highly imaginative, hysterical, or insane individuals, there have developed the various conceptions of a direct intercourse between the Godhead and man. Hypnotism and psychiatry, in the respective cases of the sane and the insane, teach us how extraordinarily sensitive the human brain is to such impressions.

In this way the legendary revelations, according to which God has manifested himself directly and personally to certain individuals, and dictated to them commandments for the guidance of Humanity, have resulted.

In this, and in no other way, has come into existence the social tyranny of religious dogmas. Certain men have made God in their own image, and have, in the course of centuries, imposed their own handiwork upon whole nations, mainly by means of the organising ability of their more ambitious successors. Even to-day such prophets frequently arise, both within and without the

walls of lunatic asylums. Each one declares that he alone possesses the true revelation.

The divine injunctions vary considerably according to the different religions, and are often mutually contradictory. Among them are commandments relating to the Godhead which have nothing to do with natural moral law, and yet are amalgamated with it. Some of these are from the human point of view frankly immoral. Many, on the other hand, represent the precepts of a more or less suitable moral code, which varies according to the personal views of the founder of the religion.

The Koran ordains polygamy and forbids the use of wine, while modern Christianity allows the latter and ordains monogamy. Both Moses and Mohammed, however, regard woman as subordinate to man, and as his private property; a view which contradicts a higher and at the same time a more natural moral law.

Mental science has now the hardihood to maintain, Kant and the religious dogmas

notwithstanding, that the moral law is completely accessible to its investigations; that true human ethics can be founded upon human nature alone; that the dogmas and commandments of pretended revelation serve only to check a progressively higher development of morals; and that the dogma which holds out promises of heaven or threats of hell in the hereafter is in its effect actually immoral, inasmuch as it seeks to regulate the moral conduct of men by purely selfish motives—by the aid of a bill of exchange upon the future life, so to speak.

* * * * *

In order to understand natural human ethics we must consider its natural source, that is to say, the origin of the sense of duty or social conscience.

The sense of duty is, as an inclination, inborn, and therefore hereditary. It can indeed be developed or dulled by education, but it cannot be acquired; and only diseases of the brain can destroy it where it once

clearly exists. What is actually inculcated or acquired, as the case may be, is not the conscience, but the object towards which it is directed, as is the case with the feeling of shame or modesty. Just as the European woman is ashamed to exhibit her bare legs, but not her face, while with the Turkish woman the reverse holds true, so the objects of the conscience, according to acquired local customs, can be absolutely opposed to one another, or at least very different in their nature. They have, however, for the most part certain features in common, which are suited to the requirements of human nature. The reason for this we shall see below.

* * * * *

From what does conscience, or the sense of duty, arise? First of all from a conflict between two groups of instinctive emotions allied with instinctive impulses: (1) the group of so-called egoistic feelings and impulses, directed towards self-preservation and

self-gratification ; and (2) the group of sympathetic or altruistic impulses directed towards the preservation and well-being of others.

If I feel sympathy or love for a person, an animal, or an object, I suffer personally and feel displeasure as soon as the object of my sympathy suffers or is endangered. Hence the words compassion and sympathy (suffering with). I therefore seek to help the object of my sympathy, to save him even at the risk of personal injury; and thence the conflict arises. If my egotism triumphs I do not come to his aid, or at most only do so if I risk nothing thereby. If, on the other hand, my sense of sympathy is victorious, I sacrifice myself.

In the former instance I experience a feeling of dissatisfaction, the feeling of neglected duty and of remorse ; in the latter I have the pleasurable sensation of duty fulfilled. And yet the nature of the object matters little. Only the intensity of the sympathy, together with the individual development of the conscience, determine the

intensity of the sense of duty in any given case. An insane person can feel the most vehement sense of duty or remorse without any real object, or as the result of entirely perverted conceptions.

As every living creature, particularly if it possesses a separate nervous system, has the instinct of self-preservation, the conscience therefore results directly from the conflict between this instinct and the secondary emotions of altruistic sympathy. These latter are of later origin, and have for the most part been evolved from the attraction between the sexes (sexual love), or from the relationship of parents to the offspring dependent upon them (parental love).

The first feelings of duty and of sympathy in the animal kingdom are therefore confined to the family, and adapted to the preservation of the species. They are also exclusive, and may only persist for a short time (as in the case of cats), but frequently they are of lifelong duration. The conjugal fidelity of certain apes and parrots is exemplary.

But the necessity of protection against common foes brought about in the case of many animals a ripening of the sense of sympathy, and it became extended to whole groups, so that here and there free communities (swallows, buffaloes, monkeys) have resulted. Finally certain species have developed the senses of sympathy and duty to such an extent that they have led to a complete anarchistic Socialism, as is the case among wasps, bees, and ants. Here the social sense has so far overcome both egotism and altruism limited to a few individuals that it wholly dominates them. The individual devotes his whole energy and labour to the communal existence, and even sacrifices his life for this object. He never, however, sacrifices his life for another single member of the community, unless the latter is of primary importance for the maintenance of the species. One worker-bee does not immolate itself for another, but does so without hesitation for the queen and the hive. It will even empty the whole contents of its

stomach into the queen bee's mouth and starve in order to save her. The altruism of the ants and the bees knows nothing of family affection or sexual love; it is confined absolutely to the hive or nest. Different beehives or ants' nests are either inimical or indifferent to one another.

Nearer to man stand the higher mammals. Every one is aware of the sentiments of sympathy and duty in the dog, for instance. In man himself these affections are pre-eminently domestic, as may be seen in the love of mother and child, husband and wife, father and son, and in all the obligations thus contracted. But they also have a considerable tendency to extend to other intimate objects or persons with whom the individual frequently comes into contact—to friends, animals, etc.

We can also observe this inclination among bees and ants, where strangers are received into the hive or nest after a short period of familiarisation. But among mankind the tendency always maintains a strongly indi-

vidual character. The result is on the one hand a grouping into communities, such as castes, tribes, and nations ; and on the other a host of individual friendships and enmities.

This fundamentally individual character of the human sense of sympathy rests primarily upon the fact that our nearest ancestors in the animal world, the parents of the existing anthropoid apes, were domestic and solitary, while our primeval ancestors lived in numberless tiny communities, inimical to one another.

In this way there appeared among mankind instinctive and exclusive impulses of sympathy and of duty, combined with intensely selfish predatory desires. The extraordinary complexity of the human brain is responsible for the strange many-sidedness of character which resulted. For example, crime and heroism developed side by side; child murder, parricide, rapine and robbery, slavery, war, and in particular the vilest subjugation of woman as an article of commerce or a beast of burden—these represent

the fruits of egotism and its attendant cunning and meanness. On the other hand we see self-sacrifice, valour, heroic martyrdom, patriotism, sense of justice, asceticism, pity for the weak, and persistent labour for the family and the State, resulting as the fruits of the instinct of sympathy and the social sense.

The primitive sense of duty, which arose from direct assistance rendered to the object of sympathy, is now being enlarged by a higher racial and individual development, and is, indeed, resolving itself into a universal inclination to subdue egoistic instincts and passions.

If from a sense of duty I do something which is wearisome or dangerous, it is for the most part no longer out of direct sympathy with the particular object. The primeval impulse (which led to conflict) is becoming independent, and is taking the form of a higher and secondary instinct, tending towards the suppression of baser desires and weaknesses. And yet it is necessary, in

order to prevent the degeneration of this instinct, that the objects towards which it is directed shall be ever more adequately and better suited to the social welfare of the community.

* * * * *

From the above brief sketch, which is based upon the theory of evolution and the researches of science, it is clear as the day that moral laws can only be relative. They were always relative to the family, to the tribe, to the fatherland; they must become relative to mankind. The racial (that is, inherited and instinctive) social sense in man is unfortunately very variable in individual cases. In the average it is extremely weak and chiefly directed towards a few individuals. Moreover, as the result of centuries of bad habits and ancient prejudices, its objects are falsely or unsuitably taught in process of educating children. Instead of the child's sense of duty being directed to the necessity of labour and social sacrifice for mankind as a whole

and posterity in particular, it is directed towards false codes of honour, local patriotism, family exclusiveness, private property, pretended divine commandments, and so forth.

The Earth is small, and human intercourse becomes more extensive every year; the union of all civilised peoples into a single great civilised community is *inevitable*. Ethics must, therefore, as far as reason permits, be directed towards this object. We require animals and plants in order to live, so that we can further extend our altruism at most to a moderate protection of other animals, if we are to avoid injury to our own race. We may remark in passing that the altruism of many lovers of animals, who prefer their favourite pets to human beings and to the social welfare, is typical of the exclusiveness and stupidity of misdirected impulses of sympathy.

Morality must therefore in the future consist of a common social impulse—it must itself become social. This impulse must overthrow not only egotism, but also the ex-

clusiveness of individual sympathies. We are still, alas, far from this goal! The family is often a thieves' kitchen; patriotism is a prolific parent of wars; while communities and societies, however noble their objects may be, readily degenerate into petty sects and cliques.

And now comes yet another difficulty, namely, the frequent lack of harmony between the ethical motives which inspire an action and its real moral value.

"Ich bin
Ein Theil von jener Kraft
Die stets das Böse will
Und stets das Gute schafft,"

says Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*.* Let us say often instead of always, and mention also that other Power which often wills the good and yet does the evil, and we have the well-known picture of the intelligent, ambitious egotist, who, without any sense of duty, achieves great and good results; and that

* "I am a part of that power which always wills the evil and always does the good."

of the foolish, infatuated altruist, who devotes the whole might of his zeal for duty to the service of socially pernicious forces!

* * * * *

As a result of exaggerating the above-mentioned phenomena certain theorists have imagined that ethics can be founded upon pure egotism. But this is a mistake. Without the altruistic impulses of sympathy and duty among its individual members no common social existence can thrive; on the contrary, it must degenerate.

The power of the emotions in man is much too strong to allow of any other result. Any one who imagines that he is completely master of his emotions makes, if possible, a still greater mistake than one who avows that he has never lied, or that his actions are governed by free-will. All human morality is bound up with these impulses and emotions. Socialism, for instance, will become moral, or else it will not come to pass. Without the support of the social conscience of

mankind it cannot become moral. Every effort must therefore be directed towards strengthening the social conscience.

The falsity of the theory of absolute good and evil is demonstrated by the whole disposition of a world in which living creatures are designed to prey upon one another. When a spider devours a fly it is good for the spider and bad for the fly. The ethical value of the act itself is therefore purely relative.

It is just the same with human ethics. To attempt to explain all the evil in the world by the sin of Adam is to attribute a miserable incapacity to God. The same holds true of the attempts of certain modern Protestants to set up the dogma of a progressive revelation, in order to bring the older dogmas into harmony with the theory of evolution and descent. All these halting exegeses are only new models of the artificial drags which theology seeks to impose upon the free research of science.

Altruism and egotism stand only in relative

opposition. Among ants and bees they are instinctively adjusted to one another with wonderful harmony, and are rarely, if ever, found in conflict. This result can and must be striven after by mankind, however great may be the difficulties presented by our hereditary nature. For its achievement a harmonious co-operation of the hereditary social conscience with reason and knowledge is absolutely necessary.

I must briefly mention two other points. Firstly, morality and social or race hygiene become one and the same thing directly we include in our conception of hygiene a healthy condition of the brain or soul, and subordinate the individual hygiene to that of society in general. Then everything socially unhygienic is immoral, and everything immoral socially unhygienic. If, for instance, I ruin a healthy, active member of society, in order possibly to achieve the salvation of an incurably diseased criminal, I am committing, although from altruistic motives, an act which is injurious from the point of view

both of ethics and social hygiene, and therefore evil and immoral.

Secondly, the boundaries of jurisprudence and of ethics are by no means clear. Jurisprudence is more narrowly confined. It has no right to lay claim to or to pass a verdict upon everything which ethics may discover or attain. Laws and the constraint they imply are a necessary evil, a crutch for the lame and defective social conscience. They must be reduced to an indispensable minimum. The ethical and social instincts, on the other hand, can never be too highly developed. Humanity must gradually develop in the future to such a point that jurisprudence may be completely replaced by an instinctive and inculcated social impulse.

> "Es erben sich Gesetz und Rechte
> Wie eine ew'ge Krankheit fort." *

In order now properly to understand our actual subject, viz. sexual ethics, we must state the fact that an action, as well as the

* "Laws and statutes pass on in heritage, like an eternal disease."—Goethe, *Faust.*

motives which inspire it, may be either (1) *ethically positive*, i.e. good; (2) *ethically negative*, i.e. evil; or (3) *ethically indifferent*, i.e. without any relation to morals.

In their relationship to morals an action and its motive may be completely independent of one another, as we have already seen.

We must further note that there are various degrees of duty, and that from this cause conflicts may arise. There are duties towards one's self, which serve to increase the worth, and particularly the social worth, of the individual by self-culture and education. In these days of effeminate culture it is too often forgotten that self-discipline and restraint, and even a certain degree of asceticism, fit the individual for freedom and happiness, while the craving for pleasure makes him useless and dependent.

Then there are duties towards the family and those nearer to us, towards the State, towards existing Humanity, and towards posterity. This last duty is the highest of all. Everything that we enjoy to-day in culture

and knowledge we owe to the toil, the suffering, and often the martyrdom of our forefathers. Our most sacred duty is, therefore, to secure for our descendants a loftier, happier and worthier existence than our own.

Speaking generally, a rational system of morals must subordinate the welfare of the individual to that of the community at large. A man who is unprejudiced and possesses the ethical and social instinct will therefore hold it as a principle first of all to do no man any injury ; then to develop his own individuality as highly as possible, which will be both for his own good and that of the community ; and as far as in him lies to be of service to others and to Humanity.

From this we may derive the following commandment of sexual ethics :—

Thou shalt take heed in thy sexual desire, in its manifestations in thy soul, and chiefly in thy sexual acts, that thou do no hurt to thyself nor another, nor, above all, to the race of men ; but shalt strive with thy might to increase the worth of each and all.

II. Sexual Ethics

Everything that we have up to the present said of ethics and the social sense in general applies also to sexual ethics in particular. The only essential thing is to discuss the matter without prejudice, and to put aside the ancient traditions of mystagogy, dogma, and custom. This should be comparatively easy when we consider our present-day conventions, hypocritical as they are to the point of nausea, and the manner in which they support the right of the stronger and other rank abuses under the false cloak of morality.

In itself the sexual desire is neither moral nor immoral. It is simply an instinct adapted to the reproduction of the species. The common confusion of sexuality with immorality is, I repeat, entirely erroneous. A man without sexual feeling must of course be extraordinarily "moral" in his sex relationships, and yet he can be the greatest scoundrel

imaginable. His sexual coldness and indifference have not the smallest ethical value.

According to the definition given above, we may classify every sexual desire as ethically positive if it is of benefit to individuals, to society, and especially to the race (that is, to posterity); as ethically negative if it does injury to any or all of these; and as ethically indifferent if it neither does injury nor is of any service. At the same time we must observe the ethical gradation: (1) *the race*, (2) *society*, (3) *the more intimate surroundings or family*, and (4) the *individual self*.

When we come to examine the concrete cases more closely we find that the circumstances attendant upon the gratification of the sexual desire, and the consequences of this gratification, lead to conflicts with morality far more frequently than does the sexual act itself.

In the first place even the normal reproduction of human beings may become immoral, in that it may do injury to the race

or to individuals. Malthus pointed out this fact. Habitable space upon the earth is limited, while, on the other hand, the procreative capacity of mankind is unlimited. If unlimited reproduction is permitted, it is possible that the existing space may be insufficient to meet the needs of the enormous multitudes of men which must result. The latter may then fall victims to famine and distress, as in the case of the Chinese, or the rabbits of Australia; and only disease, starvation, or slaughter can bring about a return to the normal condition. It must be obvious to every unbiassed person that this is not *moral*. And as there are harmless methods of regulating the number of births and to some extent the quality of the offspring, the just and proper use of these methods must be described as ethically positive. Everything is moral which makes for the happiness and well-being of society; everything immoral which prejudices or endangers it.

There can, however, be too few people in

the world; and there is everywhere a great dearth of men and women wholly sound in mind and body, light-hearted, unselfish, industrious, persevering, intelligent, able and yet well-intentioned, peaceable, and honest.

On the other hand, we have a monstrous superabundance of feeble, sickly, mentally perverted, criminally disposed, idle, treacherous, vain, crafty, covetous, passionate, capricious, and untrustworthy individuals, whose claims upon others are inexhaustible, while their own services to society are either valueless or actually harmful.

While the first-mentioned class produce far more than they consume, it is appalling to think of the vast store of human energy and human life which goes to waste in sick-rooms, lunatic asylums, hospitals, and prisons. And if we look more closely we find outside these institutions, and under no restraint, a still vaster army of human sharks, who prey physically and mentally upon society, and are a burden upon the industrious community. The greater number of these use-

less pests owe their faults to an hereditarily defective constitution of the protoplasmic germs which brought them into being; and therefore a sound system of racial ethics demands rational selection in breeding.

Equally destructive, however, are external conditions and habits of life, such as the use of alcohol, resulting as they do in paralysis of energy, confusion of the mind, and degeneration of the cells (blastophthory).

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The *libido sexualis*, or sexual desire in mankind is infinitely stronger than is necessary for the reproduction of the race. Man has no breeding season; he is always ready for sexual intercourse. Although the number of women in the aggregate only slightly exceeds that of men, the male has usually an instinctive inclination to polygamy. Luther accurately estimated the normal requirements of a healthy man in the prime of life at on the average two to three sexual connections in each week; and yet this is far

in excess of what is necessary for the procreation of children in a monogamous marriage. It is, moreover, well known that a man can even considerably exceed the above number without injury to his health, and there are women whose needs in this respect are actually greater than those of men.

It therefore follows that the widespread artificial excitement of the sexual desire from motives of sensuality is harmful from the standpoint both of ethics and of social hygiene.

We cannot, it is true, be held responsible for a natural instinct inherited from our ancestors. But we must seek to subdue this instinct as far as possible, not to excite and stimulate it by artificial means. Already there is more than enough purposeless, and therefore ethically indifferent, sexual intercourse.

And yet Tolstoy is wrong in wishing to forbid this. As long as it does no actual harm we must tolerate it, the more so be-

cause the happiness of the individual and the cheerfulness with which he labours are so often dependent upon the normal satisfaction of his instincts.

Within the limits indicated above, the gratification of the sexual instinct, whether in the case of man or woman, is in itself ethically indifferent, provided it does not result in the procreation of children. We have already dealt with the ethical value of procreation, which depends upon the nature of the results expected. And we are therefore bold enough to declare that every sexual connection which does not injure either of the two persons who take part in it, or any third person, and which, moreover, can do no injury to the child which may be engendered by it, is in itself ethically indifferent, and cannot therefore be immoral.

We have certainly imposed considerable modifications in this sentence, for it is possible for a perfectly normal sexual connection to do untold injury, especially to the woman and the child she bears ; so that

an act which is in theory not immoral may become so in practice, or may give rise to grave moral conflicts. This often happens at the present time as the result of our prejudices, established customs, and unjust laws.

From the standpoint of sexual ethics the ideal marriage is undoubtedly a monogamous union, resting upon mutual and enduring affection and loyalty, and consummated by the birth of several children; a union in which the husband may be from six to twelve years older than the wife, and both must be robust in mind and body.

This ideal state of things is not as rare as our modern pessimists would have us believe, but neither is it especially common. Moreover, if this marriage is to reach that perfection which it can and must attain, it must be completely free, that is to say, both parties must be absolutely equal before the law, and no external compulsion other than that of common obligations towards the children must bind them to one another. To this

end a complete separation of property, and a just and proper valuation of every service performed by the wife as well as the husband are of the first importance.

From the aforesaid it must by no means be inferred that every person is to yield without restraint to his sexual desires. Unfortunately this fundamentally false conception of free marriage and free love is at the present time widespread, and it cannot be too vigorously combated. In the first place, two persons are concerned in the sexual act, and any exercise of constraint by one upon the other is immoral and even criminal. The same holds true of every seduction.

Moreover, the highest freedom of man lies in his mastery of self. The only man who is truly free is the man who is able to control his lower instincts. The compulsion which must be exercised in a mutually happy sex relationship conformable to ethical principle must, however, be no external legal compulsion, but an inward self-repression. Fidelity in marriage must be a matter of mutual trust

and yet a matter of honour. The State and the laws cannot compel it, and have never been able to do so; external constraint begets only hypocrisy, strife, and treachery. On the other hand the State and the law must, as time goes on, become more and more adapted to the protection of the helpless offspring of sex unions.

Both parents, in proportion to their fitness and ability, must be made responsible for the support of their children. It is in the highest degree immoral to make a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children, and so to expose them and their mothers to public disgrace because of the fulfilment of a natural function. Is it not senseless, from the standpoint both of ethics and of law, to declare the existence of a child, and therefore of a human being, to be legal or illegal, or to speak of "natural children," as if the others were unnatural! In what bureaucratic brain can such an idea have first arisen? It is only a remnant of a barbarous code of morals, based upon the grossest prejudice.

Antiquity, alas, justifies everything — even crime!

* * * * *

Every woman who is healthy and strong should be proud of becoming a mother. If sexual intercourse were frankly and naturally treated as one of the most important acts in human life, the paternity of the child would be easily ascertainable. A woman should not wait until the birth of the child before speaking of it, but should promptly make a formal declaration as to its parentage to the registrar of births as soon as she becomes aware of her pregnancy. This would be easily practicable if all girls received proper instruction regarding the most important function of their lives. Instead of this, everything is now concealed from them, and they are brought up in gross ignorance of their sexual nature and duties.

If every pregnancy were at once legally recognised in this way, and if the law would determine the responsibilities of both parents

towards their offspring, untrammelled by marriage laws and with the well-being of society as its only aim, the most pressing need of our time, from the standpoint of sexual ethics, would be satisfied. A complete equality can only be attained by naming all children after the mother. This is, moreover, the only rational and just system. It was formerly the custom among many primitive peoples.

None of these reforms, however, need in any way debar the formation of voluntary marriage contracts. Such contracts are, indeed, distinctly advisable, for the voluntary resolve of two people to remain faithful to one another, and to build up a permanent home for their children, is at once the best, truest, and most natural foundation of marriage.

But no one can foresee the future, and therefore simple facilities for divorce must be provided in case it becomes intolerable or inexpedient for the two persons to live together any longer. A divorce must take

place if one or both of the parties wish for it. The State and the Law must only have the right to demand the fulfilment by the parents of all obligations towards their children. Marriage contracts for a fixed period are therefore as such not immoral. Such agreements have even been recommended by the Christian philosopher Charles Secrétan, in his book *Le Droit de la Femme.*

Sterile marriages, or other sex relationships, must be free. The law has no concern with them as long as they do not involve injury to any one's property, health, or personal will. They are in themselves ethically indifferent.

On the other hand, all sexual intercourse which is bought or sold, such as marriage for money, the keeping of paid mistresses, and the whole system of prostitution, is immoral, because it is corrupting and devoid of love, and amounts simply to plunder by the aid of money. Prostitution is a hotbed of sexual vices and abnormal practices. By its means the sexual instinct is perverted and led astray

into every imaginable bypath, while women are degraded in the basest of all slaveries.

Most repulsive of all, from the point of view of ethics, is the trade in prostitutes known as the "white slave traffic," with its criminal devices for the enticement, intimidation, and seduction of young girls. The traffic in waitresses for cafés and beer-gardens is often little better. It is sad enough to reflect that these loathsome outgrowths of sexual immorality often still enjoy the protection of the State, and that many medical men defend their continuance under the pretext of hygiene. It is just in this very respect that we see that social hygiene and ethics are one and the same thing. Only the idiotic one-sidedness of your specialist could declare such a monstrosity as State-established prostitution to be hygienic. A system which makes for the mental and physical ruin of the race cannot be hygienic, and the delusion that by its aid men are protected from venereal disease is in direct conflict with the actual facts.

Moreover, sexual intercourse which is bought and sold has no relation to love. As a mode of gratifying the sex instinct it stands even lower in the moral scale than the habit of self-abuse. And any man who makes use of prostitution becomes an accomplice in creating this miserable class of outcasts whom we speak of as "unfortunates." In short, whoremongery and prostitution are a social cancer, and therefore in the highest degree immoral. They furnish an instance of the manner in which money corrupts our whole civilisation. This corrupting influence, with its robbery of one man by another, makes itself felt in every department of life, and is exercised by every form of private capital.

The climax of immorality in the cult of Mammon is reached, however, by the capital employed in maintaining the two great evils of alcohol and prostitution, both of which act as bloodsuckers upon the vitality of the individual, the race, and all that is holiest in men. These two forms of capital work

hand in hand, fashioning the goddess of love in the likeness of a lewd, sordid harlot, with the man as at once her ravisher and her victim. They are also the worst enemies of our descendants, whose procreation is often undertaken in a moment of intoxication, and whose lives are exposed to the risk of alcoholic degeneration or venereal disease!

These, therefore, are the chief foes of sexual morality: the struggle for wealth (as exemplified in the domination of private capital) and the use of alcohol. Let us combat both in the name of ethics. "*In hoc signo vincemus!*"

* * * * *

The following will, I hope, make my meaning still clearer.

In sexual ethics many diseases and abnormalities play, of course, a great part. First of all there are the venereal diseases, and particularly syphilis and gonorrhœa, which often destroy family happiness and endanger the offspring. It is too often forgotten that

chronic gonorrhœa can poison marriage, and that decay of the spinal marrow (locomotor ataxia) and the so-called softening of the brain (progressive or general paralysis) are nothing else than a very late result of syphilis, appearing from ten to twenty years after infection.

In a brief statistical discussion of the question, based upon medical information, I have shown that seventy-five per cent of venereal infections are acquired while in a state of alcoholic excitement. In the vast majority of these cases the infection is communicated by means of prostitution, which, as the result of the incredibly numerous and varied sex relationships of the women, serves simply as a vast manufactory of venereal diseases.

It is true that married women are often infected by their husbands or lovers, but this is only a result of the previous visits of the latter to houses of ill-fame. Hygiene and morals both suffer serious injury in this way. Any one who is infected, and nevertheless has sexual connection with a person not

infected in the same way, commits a basely immoral act, if not a crime. This is done, however, *daily*, when the infection is concealed. Nay, more, the medical men who officially visit and examine prostitutes are well aware that they can at most only temporarily remedy a few of the worst symptoms, and that they are powerless to cure the disease itself. In spite of this such women are set at liberty once more to carry on their disastrous trade! And very few prostitutes ever completely escape venereal infection.

These are the fruits of paid "love," maintained chiefly by the drinking habits of the present day. It is plain that the chief task of sexual ethics must be the cleansing of this Augean stable. There are, however, a host of other social evils of a similar kind, such as the seduction and exploitation of waitresses, women factory workers, and so forth. These abuses belong to the same domain and present the same opportunities of infection.

* * * * *

The various perversions of the sexual instinct constitute another prolific source of disaster. Most of these are hereditary, and therefore inborn. We will only briefly mention sadism (the combination of acts of cruelty and violence with sexual gratification), masochism (sexual gratification combined with the passive endurance of similar cruelty and violence), inverted sexual feeling (homosexuality), fetishism (sexual attraction for inanimate objects), exhibitionism, sodomy, etc.

The unfortunate people who suffer from these perversions are treated unjustly and, for the most part, far too harshly. Perverse instincts which injure no one when carried into practice (fetishism, for example), are ethically indifferent and harmless, in that their possessors, generally speaking, do not multiply. It is, however, immoral for such persons to marry. Any one who suffers from an hereditary perversion of the sex instinct should avoid marriage and all procreation of children.

But if the pervert can only gratify his instinct by injuring other people, he must be regarded as a dangerous lunatic, and placed under curative treatment. There must, however, be no question of legal punishment. The foregoing treatment is above all necessary in the case of sadists (who frequently commit murder) and in that of persons of unsound mind who violate children. Homosexual persons (i.e. men or women whose sexual inclination is for their own sex) are, on the other hand, comparatively harmless as long as they direct their attentions to adults, and provided there is no seduction or use of compulsion. The same holds good in the case of other perversions such as inclination for animals. Our laws are still entirely at fault in these matters, and inflict punishment upon the basis of ancient theological dogmas.

The case of perversions acquired by suggestion, evil example, or frequent repetition is somewhat different. These latter are much more readily curable.

Perverted sexual habits often arise from

a craving for variety, or as makeshifts adopted when the opportunity for normal sex intercourse is denied. Our efforts must be directed towards removing these causes by raising the general standard of social morals.

Religious morality has been the cause of untold mischief in this matter of sexual perversions by representing as great sins and crimes actions which are in reality the result of a diseased mental state.

The habit of self-abuse is also extremely variable in its origin. It arises usually as a makeshift, but often as the result of evil example. It may also (although less frequently) be inherited, or originate from nervous trouble, while in other cases it is prompted by mechanical causes (phimosis, worms, or gymnastic exercises). There is no greater blunder than that of exaggerating its importance by representing it as a horrible and extremely dangerous vice. It must be cured by *pacification* and soothing, by strengthening of the will, and in some cases by providing the means of normal sexual

intercourse (*not*, however, by means of prostitution). This is the only proper treatment of self-abuse, which is not as dangerous as is commonly maintained. In this, as in all other cases, our conception of sexual ethics will point out the right path.

* * * * *

Abnormalities of the brain or mind, especially constitutional (hereditary) mental inferiorities, such as weakness of will-power, moral idiocy (inherent lack of conscience), epilepsy, hysteria, hypochondria, kleptomania, etc., together with all acquired mental troubles, are the cause of innumerable sexual disorders and perversions; of vices, crimes, and misdeeds of every description; of rapine and seduction; of unhappy marriages, or rather hells upon earth; and of the birth of countless doomed and wretched children.

Here we may see once again that ethics and social hygiene are at one. Until now the theologians and the lawyers have treated these mental conditions by denouncing them as deadly sins and imprisoning the unhappy

victims. This is disastrous to morality, to the unfortunate persons themselves, and to society at large. Expert mental treatment with a view to a fundamental cure is the first necessity.

Here, again, alcohol and narcotics in general are the stone which sets the whole avalanche in motion. The use of alcohol produces mental inferiorities by its corrupting influence upon the cells (blastophthory), and many people whose weakness of mind is traceable to this cause cannot resist its use, and so become dangerous inebriates.

Once more, it is the source and fountain of the evil that must be stopped.

But there are other hereditary diseases and degeneracies of every kind, not only of the brain, but of the whole body, such as the disposition to tuberculosis, rickets, short-sightedness, and diseases of the blood, all of which are related to sexual life and morals, because they are all more or less injurious to the individual and to society.

If persons suffering from such diseases

have children at all they must proceed with the greatest caution, and they should always be instructed as to the hereditary nature of their maladies and the risk of their transmission.

And now can we not hear the dictates of a truly human moral code, based upon the facts that we have just considered ?

It is true that we cannot change the present hereditary nature of man, but it is none the less our duty, now that Science has revealed this nature to us, to prepare for our posterity a greater degree of happiness and a higher standard of social life than we now possess. To this end we must first strive with all our might to destroy the all-corrupting supremacy of private capital and wealth, with its exploitation of human life and energy ; and we must further combat the use of all narcotic poisons, especially that of alcohol.

We must not rest until these two deadly monsters are overthrown.

In the sphere of sexual life we must en-

deavour to replace by truth and justice the present-day hypocrisy which parades under the false banner of "morality." We must also restore to woman the same natural and equal rights possessed by man.

Moreover, we must no longer be content to remain indifferent and idle witnesses of the senseless and unthinking procreation of countless wretched children, whose parents are diseased and vicious, and whose lives are for the most part destined to be a curse both to themselves and their fellow-men.

We must therefore recommend to all persons who are sickly or infirm in body or mind, and especially to all suffering from hereditary ailments, the use of means for the prevention or regulation of conceptions, so that they may not, out of pure stupidity and ignorance, bring into the world creatures doomed to misery and misfortune, and predisposed to disease, insanity, and crime.*

* We refer, of course, to such preventive methods as are completely harmless to the persons making use of them. Methods for the prevention of *conception* in general fulfil this condition.

We must endeavour in this way to bring about a vast and universal sterilisation of all worthless, incapable or diseased people, without attempting to prohibit in an ascetic and impracticable manner the gratification of their normal sexual instinct and their desire for affection.

The qualification for parentage must not be the possession of a certain amount of money or property, but solely the social worth and intrinsic hereditary qualities of the two individuals.

The multiplication of all who are healthy, capable, and ethically fit must be encouraged as far as possible.

An excessive frequency of childbirths in the case of one woman must be prevented and regulated by the use of the means mentioned above.

In this way we shall carry out a true racial selection and prepare the way for a better and happier Humanity. And so at last we shall have brought our true sexual ethics into living being and reality.

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